

## Question Period Note

### ACCESS TO JUSTICE

#### ISSUE:

What steps is the Government taking to improve access to justice?

#### PROPOSED RESPONSE:

- The Government recognizes the significant challenges faced by all jurisdictions related to access to justice. All participants in the justice system must work together to address these challenges.
- Later this month, I will be meeting with my provincial and territorial counterparts to address the challenge of access to justice. But I welcome the opportunity to underscore our Government's efforts to strengthen access to justice in regards to criminal, civil and family matters.
- While resources are only part of the solution, last month's budget demonstrated our commitment to access to justice by including : funding for Canadian children and families experiencing separation and divorce (*\$107.8 million over five years beginning 2017-2018 and \$21.1 million per year ongoing*); funding for the Indigenous Justice Program (*\$55.5 million over five years starting 2017-2018 and \$11.1 million per year ongoing*) and funding to address delays at Canada's Superior Courts (*\$55 million over five years and \$15.5 million per year thereafter*).
- We support the work of the National Action Committee in Access to Justice in Civil and Family matters because we recognize that when Canadians come into contact with the justice system it is most likely related to civil and family matters.
- We understand the importance of research and the ability to measure progress and we support the research currently being conducted both within the Justice Department and in University centres in the area of access to justice.

- I am confident that working with our provincial and territorial partners – and indeed all justice system participants - we will continue to strengthen the access Canadians have to our justice system.

*If pressed on the research*

- The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) has provided a \$2.5 million grant to ADAJ - a research consortium at the Université de Montréal to explore a broad range of access to justice issues.

*Other areas of financial support*

- This Government has announced an investment of \$100.9 million over five years to establish a National Strategy to Address Gender-based violence.

**BACKGROUND:**

Access to justice has been a longstanding issue facing the justice system. Referring to a wide range of challenges to the justice system, access to justice touches upon issues related to the criminal justice system such as transparency and efficiency in the management of our courts; the fairness of our laws; the manner in which victims are treated in our system.

In 2008, Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin established the National Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters (NAC) which brings together a broad spectrum of justice system stakeholders. From this, access to justice bodies have been established in all provinces and territories to serve as collaborative forums and enable initiatives and change to advance access to justice.

The Criminal Justice System Review which is currently underway will further identify changes to the system to improve access to justice.

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